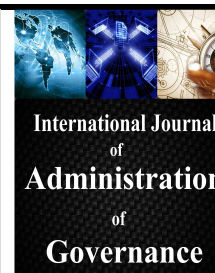




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The Level of Training Impact in Malaysian Public Service Sector

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to identify the level of training impact in Malaysian public service sector. Using a quantitative cross sectional survey approach, a total of 200 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to middle level administrators, regardless of service schemes, in Road Transport Department of Kedah State. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was applied in determining the sampling frame. The data obtained was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 for windows. Judging from the mean scores, the study suggested that the overall score of training among public servant were of *great importance*. Finally, implications and some suggestions for future research were also discussed.

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INTRODUCTION

Public Services in Malaysia needs their civil servants to adapt themselves to face various challenges and at the same time can provide best services to the customers. According to Ahmad Sarji [1] Public Services must be prepared to face challenges during globalization and liberalization. Civil servants must be highly motivated, high quality and competence in international market. In addition, Abdullah Sanusi [2] stressed about the needs of high spirit, struggle and positive thinking in order to gain customers respective and confidence. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi [3] keep on reminding that continuous effort should be taken in order to create world class Public Services and focus should be on five agenda which include skills and knowledge of human resource development.

Meanwhile, Parasuraman [4] have observed that service quality is defined as the ability of the organizations to meet or exceed customer expectations. It is the difference between customer expectations of service and the service received (or perceived). In the public sector service quality is very important. This is due to changes in technology, skills, work ethics and integrity. In order to generate public employee has a high service quality, they have to undergo training provided by the organization. Service quality in the public sector is very important to the public. This is because public sector workers are implementing policies that have been implemented so that the government can provide benefits to the public. If civil servants do not have sufficient training to perform the service quality in everyday tasks, this will cause a problem to the achievement of government objectives in each of the policies implemented by the government.

According to Goldstein and Ford [5] Training is defined as a planned and systematic effort to provide and enhance employees' knowledge, skills and attitudes related to their job, through learning experiences with a view to working more efficiently.

Furthermore, training refers to a planned effort by an organization to facilitate employees' learning of job related competencies. The goal of training is for employees to master the knowledge, skill and behaviors emphasized in training programs and to apply them to their day to day activities. Training plays a vital role in order to ensure that employees are well equipped with high quality training and hence are more productivity. Training starts as soon as a new employee is hired for a particular post by an organization.

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In addition, Organizations establish training for many purposes. One of which is purpose to structure the learning process. Training helps public servants whenever they make a change in their work by preparing them for the change. Training can contribute to the success of the organization by enabling public servants to achieve promotion and follow a chosen career path. It also helps them to acquire professional or further education qualification. Training helps to improve performance and can reduce cost to the organization. Thus, according to Junaidah [6] training and development can be initiated for a variety of reasons for an employee or group of employees, and among them are when a performance appraisal indicates performance improvement is needed, as part of an overall professional development program, as part of succession planning to help an employee be eligible for a planned change in role in the organization, to train about a specific topic directly and indirectly related to their work or task.

Therefore, training is an important variable in the success or failure in the public sector, particularly towards improving the services quality. It allows workers in the public sector to acquire the skills needed to improve and maintain the services quality in the public sector. According to Galagan [7] a quality production process that produces quality products or services depends on a quality workforce.

Moreover, according to Brown [8] said that training is a process that helps companies and employees cope with the effects of changes in the business world that result from competition, globalization, and technological advancements. The process essentially seeks to improve trainees' skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or on the job behaviour indicated that a company seeking continuous improvement could use training managers to facilitate the implementation of total quality management, as they would play the role of change agents.

Hence, the purpose of this research is to investigate the level of training impact in Malaysian public service sector. Obviously, such knowledge is very useful for both academic and managerial purposes.

Literature Review:

Researchers have come up with many definitions of training. Training is a process whereby people acquire capabilities to aid in the achievement of organizational goals. Because this process is tied to a variety of organizational purposes, training can be defined broadly or narrowly, it depends to the purpose of the user. Buckley and Caple [9] defined training as planned and systematic effort to modify or develop knowledge/skill/attitude through learning experience, to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities. Its objective, in the working environment, is to enable an individual to acquire abilities in order that he or she can perform adequately a given task or job.

According Thorne and Mackey [10] training is often seen as something that is work related – on-job training, off-job training or employment training schemes. In many cases it is perceived as being formal process. For example, with a trainer in training room who is often supported by materials such as delegated guide. The underpinning principle of how people learn learning styles, listening, questioning and giving feedback applies to training as well as teaching, lecturing, coaching and assessing. There is normally an expectation that the training will have an aim and objectives, structured contents and evaluation.

Hamblin [11] defined training as “any activity which deliberately attempts to improve a person’s skill in a job”. A similar definition was offered by Flippo [12] as ‘the act of increasing the knowledge and skills of an employee for doing a particular job’. He stressed the purpose of training is to increase productivity, heighten morale, reduce supervision, reduce accidents and increase organizational stability and flexibility.

Subsequently, Cherrington [13] defined training by contrasting it with education. He offered a clear-cut explanation on the distinction between training and education which is more often than not regarded as synonymous. He clarified that ‘training’ refers to the acquisition of specific skills or knowledge to perform a specific job, whereas ‘education’ is much more general and attempts to provide students with a general knowledge that can be applied in many different settings.

According to Bohlander and Snell [14] many new employees come equipped with most of the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) needed to start their work. Others may require extensive training before they are ready to make much of a contribution to their organization. On the other hand, it is not to deny that almost every employee, however, need some type of ongoing training to maintain effectiveness in their performance or to adjust to some new ways of work.

The term training is often used casually to describe almost any effort initiated by an organization to foster learning among its members. However, many experts distinguish between training, which tends to be more narrowly focused and oriented toward short-term performance concerning developments, which tends to be oriented towards more broadening and individual’s skills for the future responsibilities. The two terms is likely to be combined into a single phrase as a training and development.

According to Jones & George [15] training primarily focuses on teaching organizational members on how to perform their current jobs and helping them to acquire the knowledge and skills they need to be an effective performers. Meanwhile, John and Nadler and Nadler state that the development, on the other hand, focuses on building the knowledge and skills of organizational members so that they are prepared to take on new responsibilities and challenges. Training is used more frequently at lower levels of an

organization; development tends to be used more frequently by professionals and managers. In simple terms, training and development refer to the imparting of specific skills, abilities and knowledge to an employee [16] [17].

Dessler [18] state that training refers to the methods used to give new or present employees the skills they need to perform their jobs. In a limited sense, training provides employees with specific, identifiable knowledge and skills for use on their present jobs.

In other words, Mathis and Jackson [19] state that sometimes a distinction is drawn between training and development, with development being broader in scope and focusing on individuals gaining new capabilities is useful for both present and future jobs.

In addition, Zane Berge [20] explained the training and development consider as the dynamics factor in the corporate world. The training objectives continue to shift from programmed instruction to performance analysis. Learning is now defined as a competitive strategy in the workplace. Trainers must engage in defining strategic goals, analyzing organizational process and providing better consistent performance within the business context. Training and development in public sector assumed as a foundation, in helping not only level of the productivity but also the development of employees in any organization.

Subsequently, according to Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, and Weick [21] training can be defined as a planned learning experience designed to bring about permanent change in an individual's knowledge, attitudes, or skills. McNamara (n.d.) lists the following as general benefits from employee training such as increased job satisfaction and morale, increased motivation, increased efficiencies in processes therefore resulting in financial gain, increased capacity to adopt new technologies and methods, increased innovation in strategies and products and reduced employee turnover.

As a conclusion, training is essential not only to increase productivity but also to motivate and inspire workers by letting them know how important their jobs are and giving them all the information they need to perform those jobs and more concerned about how to ensure the transfer of learned skills to the work situation for a better service quality in the public servant.

Methodology:

This research was designed to study the level of training impact in Malaysian public service sector. Data were collected using a cross-sectional self-administered questionnaire, developed specifically for the individual level unit of analysis.

The instrument used for this study was using a 5-Point multi-item Likert scale format was employed, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (Somewhat disagree), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Somewhat agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

Proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used in selecting the sample. This procedure ensured each subpopulation that existed in the total population is well represented.

A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to the public servant in Road Transport Department of Kedah State. Subsequently 200 replies were obtained. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19 for Windows was used to generate descriptive statistics.

Finding And Discussion:

This research obtained 100% response rate. The frequency of respondents was 54.0% (female) and 46.0% (male). While 29.0% respondents age are 31 – 35 years old, above 51 years old are 21.5%, 13.0% respondents age between 26 – 30 years old, 12.5% was 36 – 40 years old, 9.5% age between 46 – 50 years old, 7.5% are 41 – 45 years old and 7.0% respondents age are 21 – 25 years old. The marital status of the respondents is 86.5% are married, 13.0% was single and 0.5% respondent was divorced.

The education background of the respondents is 55.5% has A Level, SPM and STPM. Then, 30.5% has diploma, 11.0% has degree, Master Degree's was 2.5% and 0.5% PhD. The job position 90.0% respondents was support team and 10.0% respondents are professional. Then, 97.0% was permanent staff and 3.0% was contract staff. Meanwhile, at the job scope 38.0% respondents are administrative, 32.5% respondents are enforcement, 14.0% accounting and finance, 14.0% was others and 1.5% respondents are information technology. A profile of the respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 2 had indicated both the mean and standard deviations of training scale. The ranking of importance as suggested by Rosli and Rosli and Ghazali were used as a reference in determining the level understanding of the training in the public sector. The authors suggest the following four categories based on rank of importance: mean value of 2.59 and below is indicating as *less important*, mean value between 2.60 to 3.40 is indicated as *moderate importance*, mean value ranging from 3.41 to 4.20 is indicated as *high importance*, and mean value of 4.21 and above is indicating as *great importance*.

Hence, based on the findings, 6 items which obtained mean value greater than 4.21 indicated as great importance were Attending training programmed can increase my work competence, I am truly excited to practice all the knowledge gained onto my work tasks once I returned from the training programmed, I believed

that attended course programmed would improve my work skills, I am in full spirit when realise that I can apply the new knowledge gain onto my work tasks, I use the problem solving and decision making skills presented in the training courses to help improve my job performance and I use the interpersonal and communication skills presented in the training course to improve my job performance.

Table 1: Profile Of The Respondents.

Respondent's profiles		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	46.0
	Female	108	54.0
Age	21 - 25 years	14	7.0
	26 - 30 years	26	13.0
	31 - 35 years	58	29.0
	36 - 40 years	25	12.5
	41 - 45 years	15	7.5
	46- 50 years	19	9.5
	>51 years	43	21.5
Marital Status	Married	173	86.5
	Single	26	13.0
	Divorced	1	0.5
Education level	A Level, SPM, STPM	111	55.5
	Diploma	61	30.5
	Bachelor's degree	22	11.0
	Master's degree	5	2.5
	PhD	1	0.5
Job Position	Managerial/Professional	20	10.0
	Support	180	90.0
Job Status	Permanent	194	97.0
	Contract	6	3.0
Job Scope	Administrative	76	38.0
	Accounting & Finance	28	14.0
	Information Technology	3	1.5
	Enforcement	65	32.5
	Others	28	14.0

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics Of Training.

	Mean	SD
Attending training programmed can increase my work competence	4.49	.680
I am truly excited to practice all the knowledge gained onto my work tasks once I returned from the training programmed	4.21	.644
I believed that attended course programmed would improve my work skills	4.36	.585
I am in full spirit when realise that I can apply the new knowledge gain onto my work tasks	4.32	.616
I use the problem solving and decision making skills presented in the training courses to help improve my job performance	4.30	.578
I use the interpersonal and communication skills presented in the training course to improve my job performance	4.22	.643

Observing from the mean score, the level of understanding of the training in the public sector was suggested to be *great importance*. The mean score ranged from 4.21 to 4.49 on a five point Likert scale. Besides that, the variability of the rating exhibited to be relatively high with the standard deviation range of 0.578 to 0.680, consistent in importance pertaining to the agreement about training items among the respondents. From these, six items were reported as *great importance*.

The findings revealed a high mean value among public servant in Malaysian public sectors. Subsequently, judging from the score, which showed a strong mean concentration, probably it may be assumed that public servant in Malaysian public sectors have exhibited their training skill ability at the workplace. All these practices have been well employed by the respondents of all genders, all education levels, age groups, job position types, job status groups and different job scope across the Malaysian public sectors.

Perhaps with continuous on the job training and development programs conducted by their respective organizations, public servant are more conscious of their obligations and know to act as it should independently. Another possible reason is that public servant possessed a high educational level and therefore they not only aware the challenges encountered by the Malaysian public sector, but also understand how to act in executing their responsibilities at the workplace.

Conclusion And Implication:

The results obtained show that the public servant in Malaysian public sector has shown rather high understanding of the training at the organization. Several factors such as assimilation, consistent and comprehensive on the job training could be the reasons why public servants are more conscious of their obligations and encourage them to the training program at the organization. The findings may add to the

literature on importance of the training, especially in the context of Malaysian public sector. Since the present study only emphasizes on the Malaysian public sectors, it would enhance the finding, if future research could also include employees from private sectors in Malaysia.

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